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CLAIMS:

1. A container comprising a structural frame defining a rectangular volume suitable for stacking with conventional intermodal containers and forming at least one compartment therein, said at least one compartment
5 comprising:
a hopper formed at a bottom end of said at least one compartment which tapers downwardly and inwardly to a chute opening;
a gate member which selectively closes the chute opening of said at least one compartment; and
10 a hatch opening at a top end of said at least one compartment which is selectively covered by a hatch cover.
2. The container according to Claim 1 wherein said at least one compartment is formed of rigid structural materials fixed to the structural frame.
3. The container according to Claim 1 wherein side walls of
15 said at least one compartment comprise load bearing members of the structural frame.
4. The container according to Claim 1 wherein side walls of said at least one compartment are substantially planar.
5. The container according to Claim 4 wherein the side walls
20 are substantially flush with exterior sides of the structural frame.
6. The container according to Claim 1 wherein the structural frame comprises upright corner posts at each corner of the frame, top and bottom rails spanning between respective top and bottom ends of the corner posts on each side of the frame, corner connectors at respective corners of the frame for
25 coupling to adjacent intermodal containers and structural sheeted material spanning between the corner posts on each side of the frame which define side walls of said at least one compartment.
7. The container according to Claim 6 wherein the structural frame further comprises upright intermediate posts equally spaced between the
30 corner posts in which the structural sheeted material spans an exterior of the intermediate posts.
8. The container according to Claim 6 wherein said at least one compartment comprises a plurality of compartments and wherein the structural

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frame further comprises partition members spanning across an interior of the structural frame between opposing sides of the structural frame for separating the compartments from one another.

9. The container according to Claim 8 wherein the partition
5 members are formed of structural sheeted material.

10. The container according to Claim 1 wherein the gate member of said at least one compartment includes an operating linkage for opening and closing the gate member, the gate member and operating linkage being selectively mounted on the hopper for ready replacement thereof.

11. The container according to Claim 1 wherein the hatch cover
10 of said at least one compartment includes an operating linkage for opening and closing the hatch cover, the hatch cover and operating linkage being selectively mounted on the compartment for ready replacement thereof.

12. The container according to Claim 1 wherein the hatch cover
15 and the gate member of said at least one compartment each include an operating linkage for opening and closing the respective hatch cover or gate member while the container is in a stacked configuration with an adjacent container of similar configuration.

13. The container according to Claim 12 wherein the operating
20 linkages are accessible by an operator at a long side of the structural frame.

14. The container according to Claim 13 wherein the operating linkages are accessible by an operator at either one of two opposing long sides of the structural frame.

15. The container according to Claim 1 wherein said at least one
25 compartment comprises a plurality of compartments each having a respective gate member and a respective hatch opening.

16. The container according to Claim 1 wherein the gate member is fully contained within an area bound by the frame as the hatch cover is displaced between open and closed positions thereof.

17. The container according to Claim 1 wherein the hatch cover
30 is fully contained within an area bound by the frame as the hatch cover is displaced between open and closed positions thereof.

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18. The container according to Claim 1 in combination with a container carrying rail car having a deck upon which the frame of the container is supported, wherein the hopper of said at least one compartment of the container is supported above the deck of the rail car.

5 19. The container according to Claim 1 wherein the gate member and hatch cover each include a sealing member such that said at least one compartment forms an airtight enclosure when both the gate member and the hatch cover are closed.

10 20. The container according to Claim 19 wherein said at least one compartment comprises a plurality of compartments which are sealed with respect to one another.